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Letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Plurinational State of Bolivia, in its capacity as President of the Security Council during the month of October 2018, will hold a briefing on the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: root causes of conflict — the role of natural resources". The meeting will be held on 16 October at 10 a.m. at United Nations Headquarters in New York. To guide the discussion during the event and to provide for more information about it, a concept note is attached (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Sacha **Llorentty Soliz**
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to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council briefing on the theme "Maintenance of international peace and security: root causes of conflict — the role of natural resources", to be held on 16 October 2018

Objective

1. To highlight how the control, exploitation and access to natural resources has been a catalyst for the outbreak, escalation and continuation of armed conflicts, unlawful invasions and the overthrow of Governments, causing humanitarian disasters and long-term consequences in the management of post-conflict scenarios.

Background

2. The root causes of conflict are most often multidimensional and complex, including a range of social, political, economic and historical factors that together may cause violence to occur. However, in many cases conflict is fuelled by a dispute over the control, exploitation and access to natural resources, with foreign interests, multinational companies, elite actors and armed groups monopolizing control over resource revenues at the expense of local citizens.

3. In fact, research shows that the existence of oil and surface diamonds in a territory increases the risk of conflict and prolongs instability, while environmental pressure and resource scarcity lead to an escalation in instability and violence. As a consequence, both national and international security are affected, conflicts are prolonged and peacebuilding efforts are undermined.

4. The dispute over control of natural resources has been one of the greatest challenges of the twentieth century and continues to constitute a major obstacle for peace and international security in the twenty-first century. The conflicts fuelled by access, control or exploitation of natural resources involve different parties, are located in different parts of the world, at different geographical locations and have both local and transboundary dimensions.

5. During the past decades, the international community has witnessed situations in which Governments have been overthrown and militias and armed groups have engaged and exacerbated conflict while trying to gain control of natural resources to keep financing their illegal activities, at the expense of the common interest of the population. The Security Council has noted previously that, in a number of armed conflict situations, the illegal exploitation, trafficking and illicit trade of natural resources have played a major role in contributing to the outbreak of violence or prolonging the fighting.

6. The Security Council discussed this issue in June 2013, under the Presidency of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and also in June 2007, under the Presidency of Belgium, during which a presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/22) was agreed upon. Throughout the discussions, as well as in the presidential statement, the emphasis was placed on the role of United Nations missions and peacekeeping operations in assisting Governments, upon their request, in preventing the illegal exploitation of natural resources by the parties to the conflict, in particular, where appropriate, by developing adequate observation and policing capacities to that end (S/PRST/2007/22).

7. For this briefing, we propose that the focus shift from the lack of governance or poor management of natural resources by the affected State to the role of armed groups, multinational companies, international finance networks and foreign interests, whose presence and actions on the ground are an important factor in either contributing towards maintaining stability or in generating the conditions for the outbreak of violent conflict.

Guiding questions

8. Taking into consideration the role of natural resources as a root cause of conflict, the Security Council should focus on the following questions:

(a) How to ensure the full respect and compliance of the Charter of the United Nations in order to prevent conflicts and ensure that sovereign States manage their own natural resources in the interests of their people?

(b) What actions should the Security Council take whenever the sovereignty of a State is breached by a third party interested in the control, exploitation and access to its natural resources?

(c) How to enhance the legitimacy of States experiencing conflicts and their ability to protect and extend their authority across national sovereign territory?

(d) How can Member States, the United Nations system and the private sector work together to ensure that companies exploiting or trading in conflict areas carry out risk-based due diligence and undertake supply chain checks to make sure that they are trading responsibly?

Format

9. The format will be as follows:

(a) The informative briefing will be held on 16 October 2018 at 10 a.m. in the Security Council chamber.

(b) The Secretary-General will brief the Council.

(c) Additional speaker (to be confirmed).

(d) No outcome is expected.